

Assisting Constituents in the 1st Congressional District

Robert Andrews

Conservation Technical Assistance

Conservation Plans for Farmland Preservation - Saving Water and Saving Farms

Farms funded under the New Jersey Farmland Preservation Program are required to develop a conservation plan. NRCS staff provides technical assistance to producers who have been accepted into the program. A farmer in East Greenwich Township installed 45 acres of low-flow irrigation, reducing his use of water, which is now applied more efficiently to the crops.

Irrigation and water management practices in New Jersey were very much needed in 2001 for farm survival and for productive yields. Without irrigation on sandy soils in South Jersey, growers who farmed fall vegetables and tree fruit would have been seriously affected. Irrigation practices that were implemented in 2001, as well as the proceeding years, will be beneficial to the growers as insurance against future drought risks. Additionally, these water conservation practices benefit the region by protecting water supplies.

In Partnership with Camden Greenways

NRCS takes an active role in Camden Greenways, Inc., a non-profit association of agencies dedicated to creating and maintaining open space along rivers and streams for the benefit of the public. In 2001, Greenways conducted a boat and walking tour of the proposed greenway. The group then obtained approval of the Camden City Council to amend the zoning ordinance to accommodate the greenway along the Cooper River, Delaware River and Newton Creek.

Resource Conservation and Development

South Jersey RC&D Helping to Secure Repaupo Project

The South Jersey Resource Conservation and Development Council (RC&D) continues to work with Greenwich and Logan townships in Gloucester County to secure completion of the much-needed Repaupo Creek levee and tide gate project. As this project is listed in the House version of the 2002 Farm Bill, RC&D will request that NRCS engineers oversee design and construction work for this project. When completed, the residents and business owners in the area will be able to sleep a little more soundly at night. The aquifers that provide drinking water to over 1 million people will be protected from salt water intrusion and intrusion of potential harmful chemicals if a spill occurs on the Delaware River. This project will potentially realize a 1,000-acre savings to a fresh water wetland system that provides a home to many wildlife species.

RC&D Assists with Homeland Security

In January 2001, South Jersey RC&D provided assistance for homeland security. Dr. Jacob Kool of the Centers for Disease Control contacted the council for weather data from several of the council's weather stations. The Centers for Disease Control used the weather data to detect if local weather patterns may have moved the anthrax spores from Trenton northeast to New York City. South Jersey RC&D's

weather data was the only weather data available in New Jersey. The council provided to the centers, at no cost, complete hourly data for the month of October.

Conservation Programs

Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) / State Conservation Cost Share Program (CCSP)

NRCS provides technical assistance for conservation projects funded by the State CCSP. NRCS staff time is funded through its Conservation Technical Assistance allocations.

- **EQP/CCSP Help Save Water**

NRCS and Soil Conservation District conservationists and the farm community are working hard to reduce water consumption in South Jersey. In District 1, 53 acres of irrigated cropland were converted to a low volume system with active management to save 300,000 gallons annually. \$2,744 in Federal EQIP funds and \$10,218 in State CCSP funds were allocated to this project.

- **Water Quality Improvements in Winslow Township**

Reduction of nutrient and pesticide loading into surface and ground water continues to be an important issue. In 2001, NRCS and Soil Conservation District staff provided technical assistance to a farmer in Winslow Township to implement 195 acres of integrated crop management systems with EQIP and CCSP funds.

Two New Programs: AMA and SWCA

One producer in District 1 was approved for Federal funding under two new NRCS-administered programs: the Agricultural Management Assistance Program (AMA) for \$16,400 funding, and the Soil and Water Conservation Assistance Program (SWCA) for \$9,700 funding. The farm will be converted to organic production of vegetables by managing the soils, pesticides, and nutrients. The farm will also reduce water consumption by integrating water management strategies in the irrigation system.

Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program

NRCS staff continued to assist with implementation of existing WHIP contracts. A producer in District 1 is improving part of a farm for the benefit of bobwhite quail, one of the three priority species of wildlife impacted by agriculture.

Soil Erosion and Stormwater Control Provided in Developing Areas

The NJ Conservation Partnership helps growing communities protect their soil resources from erosion. Through the State Soil Conservation Committee's erosion and sediment control regulatory program, the Soil Conservation Districts serving District 1 review and certify proposed development plans for soil erosion control before and after construction. They also review plans for stormwater control and issue permits. Local inspectors check compliance to ensure natural resource conservation on development sites.

For more information about these and other conservation issues in the 1st District, contact the Burlington County SCD: (609) 267-7410; Camden County SCD: (856) 767-6299; Gloucester County SCD: (856) 589-5250 or NRCS Hainesport Service Center: (609) 267-0811; NRCS Woodstown Service Center: (856) 769-1126. State level contacts are the SSCC: (609) 292-5540; NJACD: (973) 398-2511; NRCS: (732) 246-1171.